

PRISON SUICIDES IN BELGIUM, 2000–2016

LOUIS FAVRIL // 2ND LOWLANDS SUICIDE RESEARCH MEETING, AMSTERDAM

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

- Prisoners = high-risk group for suicide
 - Leading cause of mortality in prisons worldwide
 - Lifetime prevalence of ideation ($\frac{1}{3}$) and attempts ($\frac{1}{5}$)
 - 2011–2014:

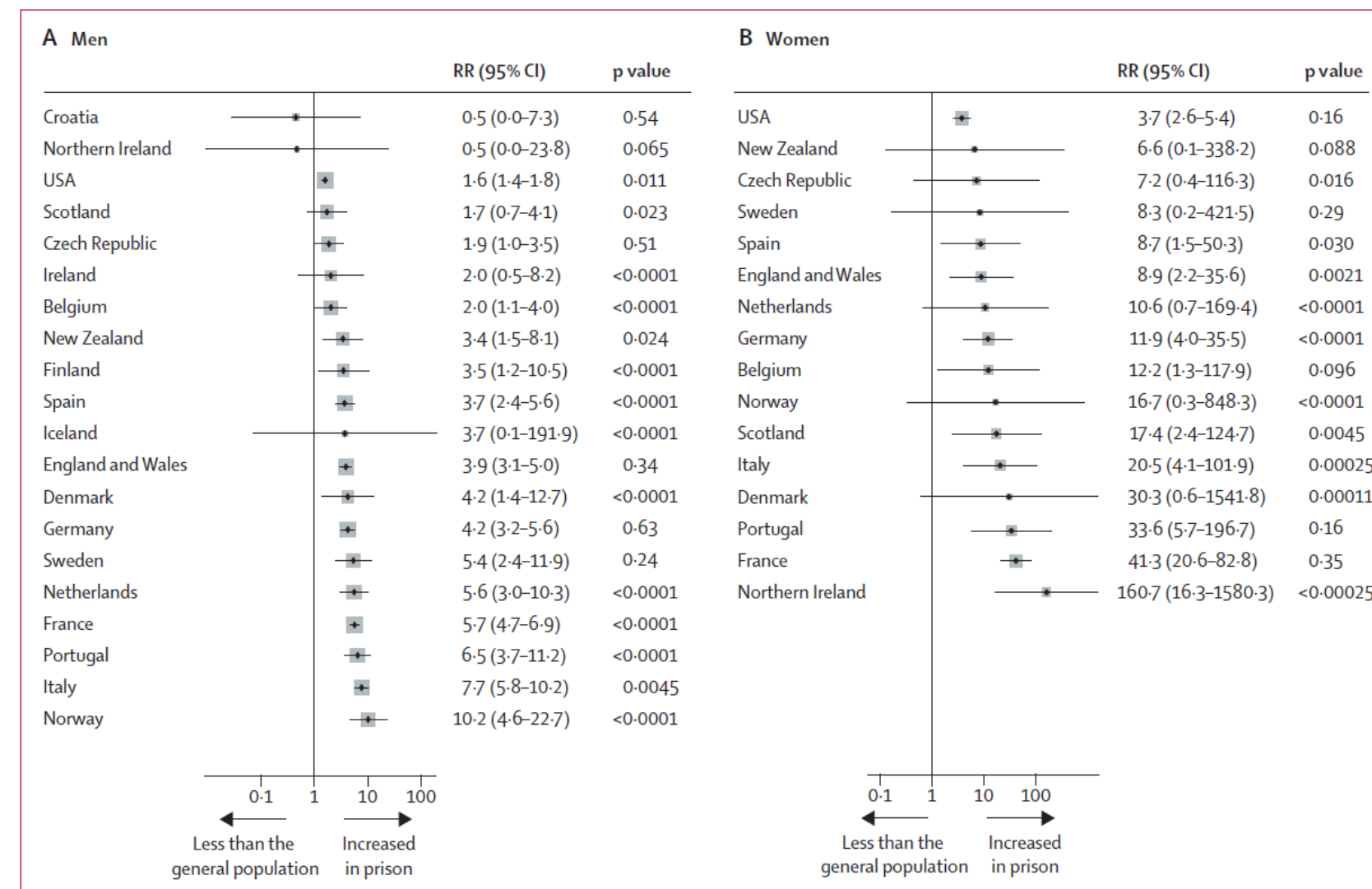
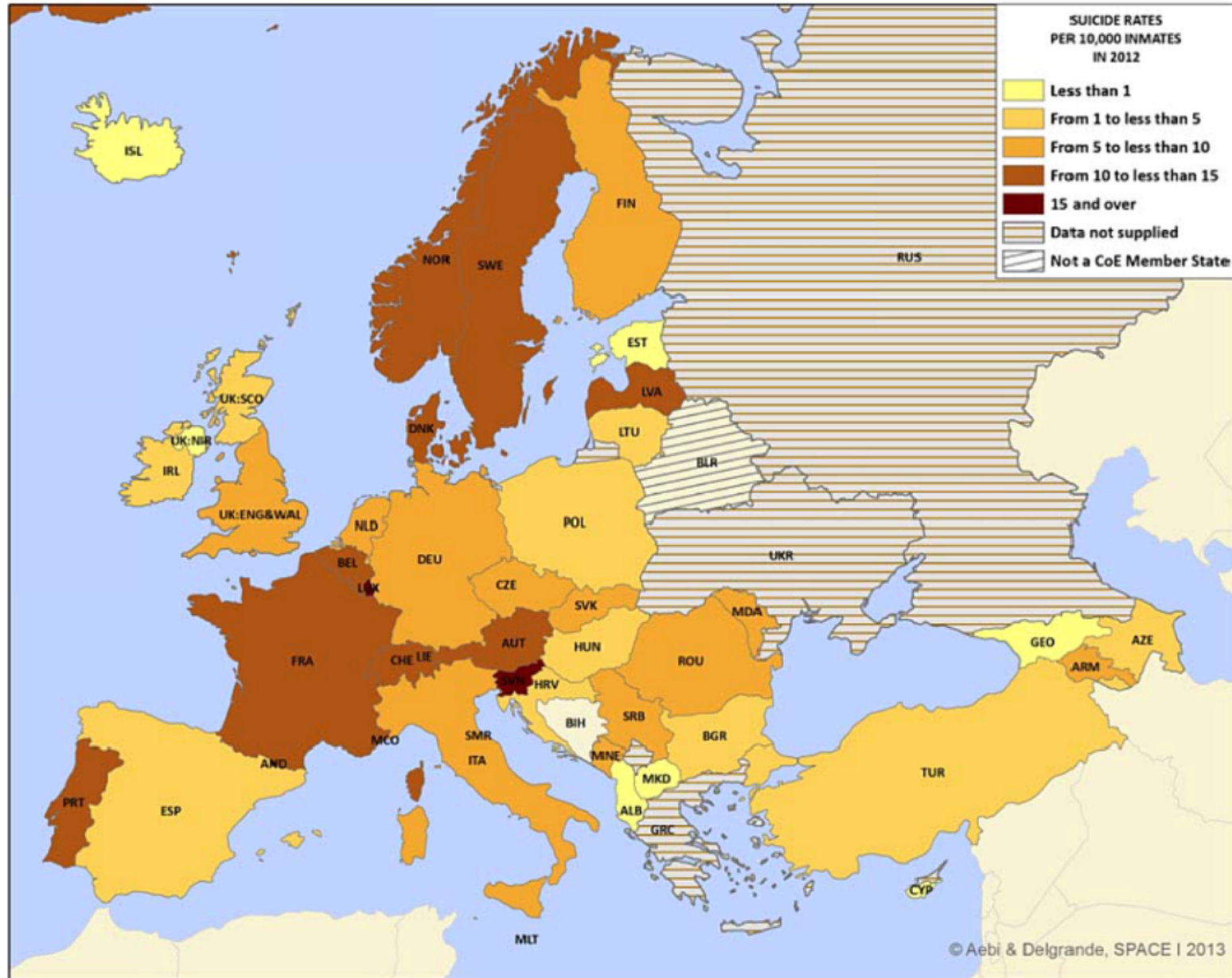


Figure 1: Rate ratios of suicide in prisoners compared with the general population
RR=rate ratio.



	Total number of prison suicides, both genders (2011-14)	Annual suicide rate per 100 000 prisoners (including pretrial detainees)*		Annual suicide rate per 100 000 general population aged 30-49 years†	Rate ratio		
		Rate	95% CI		Rate	95% CI	p value
Eastern Europe							
Croatia	2	10	0-29	14.6	0.7	0.1-11.4	0.75
Czech Republic	44	54	39-70	17.8	3.1	1.7-5.6	0.00027
Poland	59*	24	21-28	24.6	1.0	0.6-1.6	0.93
Northern Europe							
Denmark	14	91	60-122	12.9	7.0	4.1-11.8	<0.0001
Finland	13	103	100-105	21.0	4.8	2.4-20.2	0.0038
Iceland	1	165	0-487	28.4	5.8	0.1-297.2	0.40
Norway	26	180	98-262	12.9	14.0	6.4-30.5	<0.0001
Sweden	26	104	90-118	14.1	7.4	3.4-16.1	<0.0001
Western Europe							
Belgium	57	114	99-129	24.1	4.7	2.8-8.0	<0.0001
England and Wales	284	83	66-100	13.6	6.1	4.8-7.7	<0.0001
France	467	176	169-183	19.3	9.1	8.3-10.0	<0.0001
Germany	220	81	75-88	12.7	6.4	4.9-8.4	<0.0001
Ireland	8	47	32-63	15.7	3.0	0.8-12.2	0.34
Netherlands	43	99	53-145	13.0	7.6	4.2-14.0	<0.0001
Northern Ireland	2‡	29	0-106	20.1	1.5	0.1-23.4	0.65
Scotland	22	69	44-93	26.2	2.6	1.1-6.1	0.027
Switzerland	26	98	49-146	11.5	8.5	3.9-18.9	<0.0001
Southern Europe							
Italy	204	81	69-93	6.7	12.1	9.1-16.0	<0.0001
Portugal	59	108	69-147	10.4	10.4	6.2-17.5	<0.0001
Spain	95	43	30-55	7.8	5.5	3.7-8.2	<0.0001
Australasia							
Australia	37‡	40	29-51	17.2	2.3	1.3-4.1	0.0069
New Zealand	23	67	18-115	13.2	5.1	2.2-11.6	0.00015
North America							
Canada	31‡	27	0-48	11.4	2.3	1.2-4.3	<0.0001
USA	2143	23	21-26	17.4	1.3	1.2-1.5	<0.0001

*Annual rates calculated based on however many years available between 2011 and 2014. †Annual rates for the year 2012. ‡Total in a 3 year period (2011-13).

Table 2: Number and rates of suicide in prisoners compared with the general population

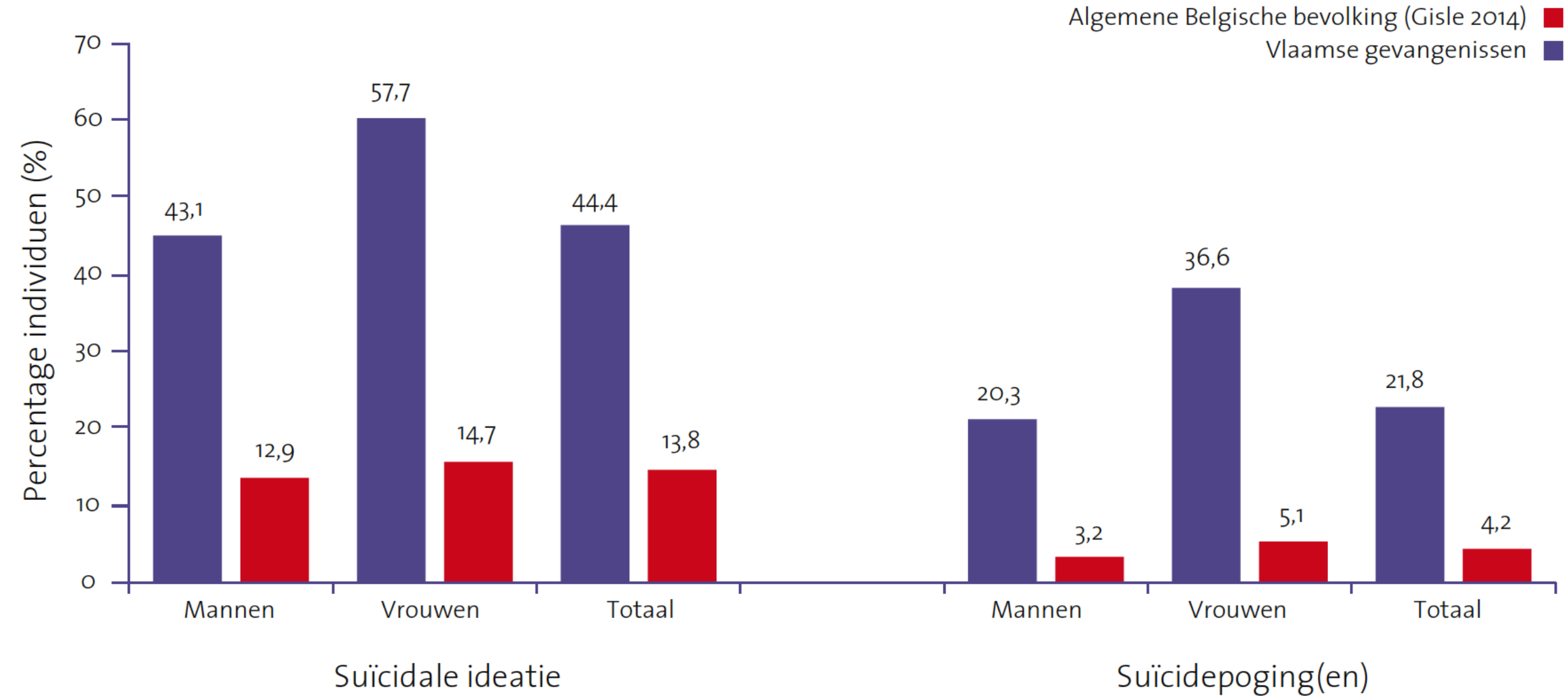
BELGIUM (N=1,326)

TABEL 1 Prevalentiecijfers (%) van suïcidaal gedrag bij gedetineerden in de Vlaamse gevangenissen

	Geslacht		Detentiestatus		Totaal (n = 1326)
	Man	Vrouw	Beklaagd	Veroordeeld	
	(n = 1203)	(n = 123)	(n = 459)	(n = 867)	
<hr/>					
<i>Suïcidale ideatie</i>					
Tijdens huidige detentie (< 12 m)	23,7**	36,6**	28,1*	23,2*	24,9
Ooit	43,1**	57,7**	42,3	45,6	44,4
<i>Suicideplan</i>					
Tijdens huidige detentie (< 12 m)	14,1	15,4	14,6	14,1	14,3
Ooit	29,2*	39,8*	25,3**	32,8**	30,2
<i>Suïcidepoging</i>					
Buiten detentie	15,4**	34,1**	15,0	18,2	17,1
Tijdens detentie	9,1	13,8	5,9**	11,4**	9,5
Ooit	20,3**	36,6**	17,9*	23,9*	21,8

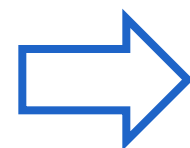
* p < 0,05; ** p < 0,01

FIGUUR 1 Lifetimeprevalentie van suïcidaal gedrag: huidige studie vs. algemene Belgische populatie



WHY? — A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Mental illness
Substance use
Physical health
Prior suicide attempt
Impulsivity/aggression

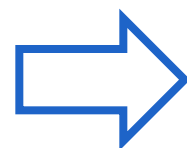


Suicidal thoughts/
behaviour



Pains of imprisonment
Social support
Bullying, threats, violence
Lack of purposeful activity
Overcrowding
Shame, guilt, uncertainty

IMPORTATION
MODEL
pre-existing
vulnerability



Suicidal thoughts/
behaviour

diathesis



stress



DEPRIVATION MODEL
prison-specific
stressors



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International Journal of Law and Psychiatry



Suicidal ideation while incarcerated: Prevalence and correlates in a large sample of male prisoners in Flanders, Belgium



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SUICIDE PREVENTION IN (BELGIAN) PRISONS

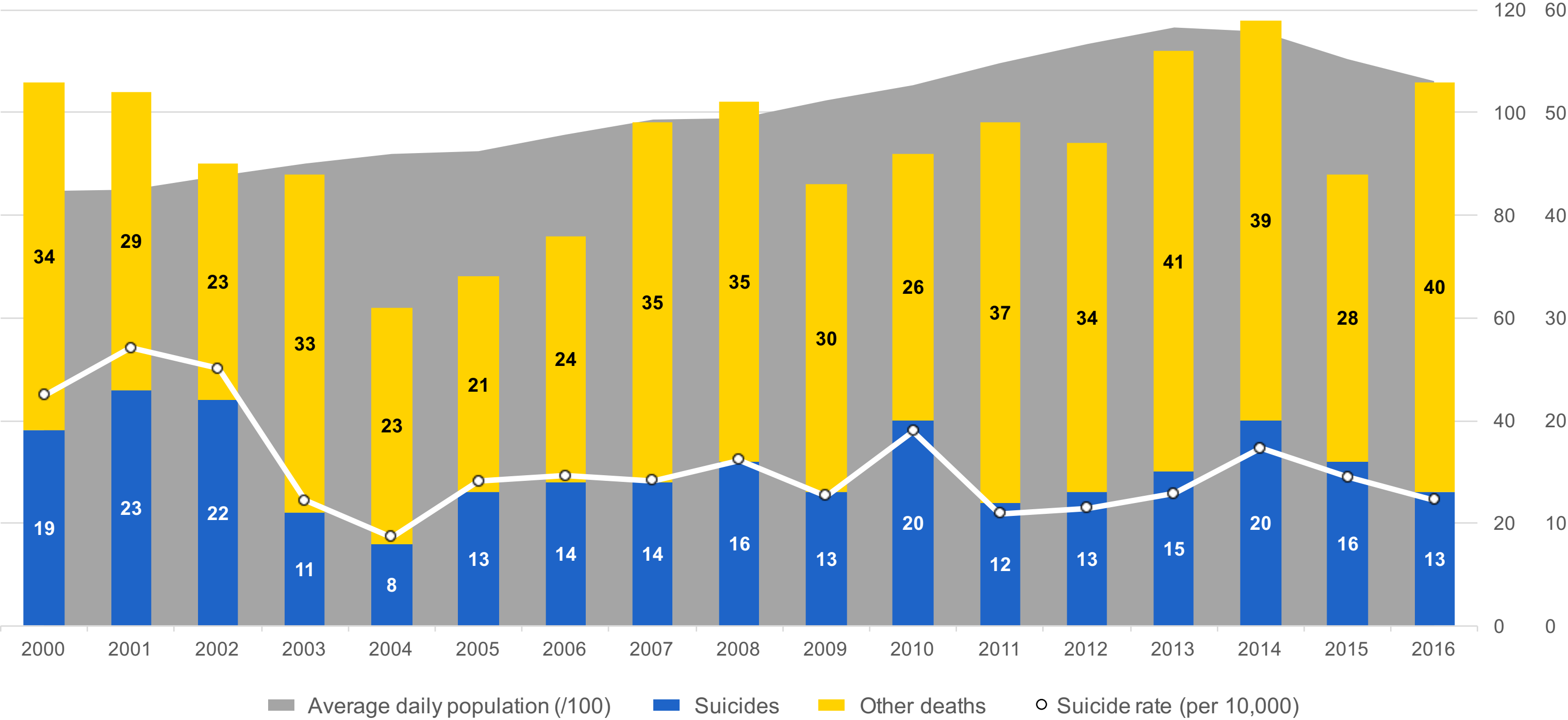
- International priority (WHO, 2007)
- NICE (2017): identify and understand the factors related to suicide when developing interventions to prevent such outcomes among prisoners
- In Belgium: no empirical data
- No national prevention policy in Belgian prisons

AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

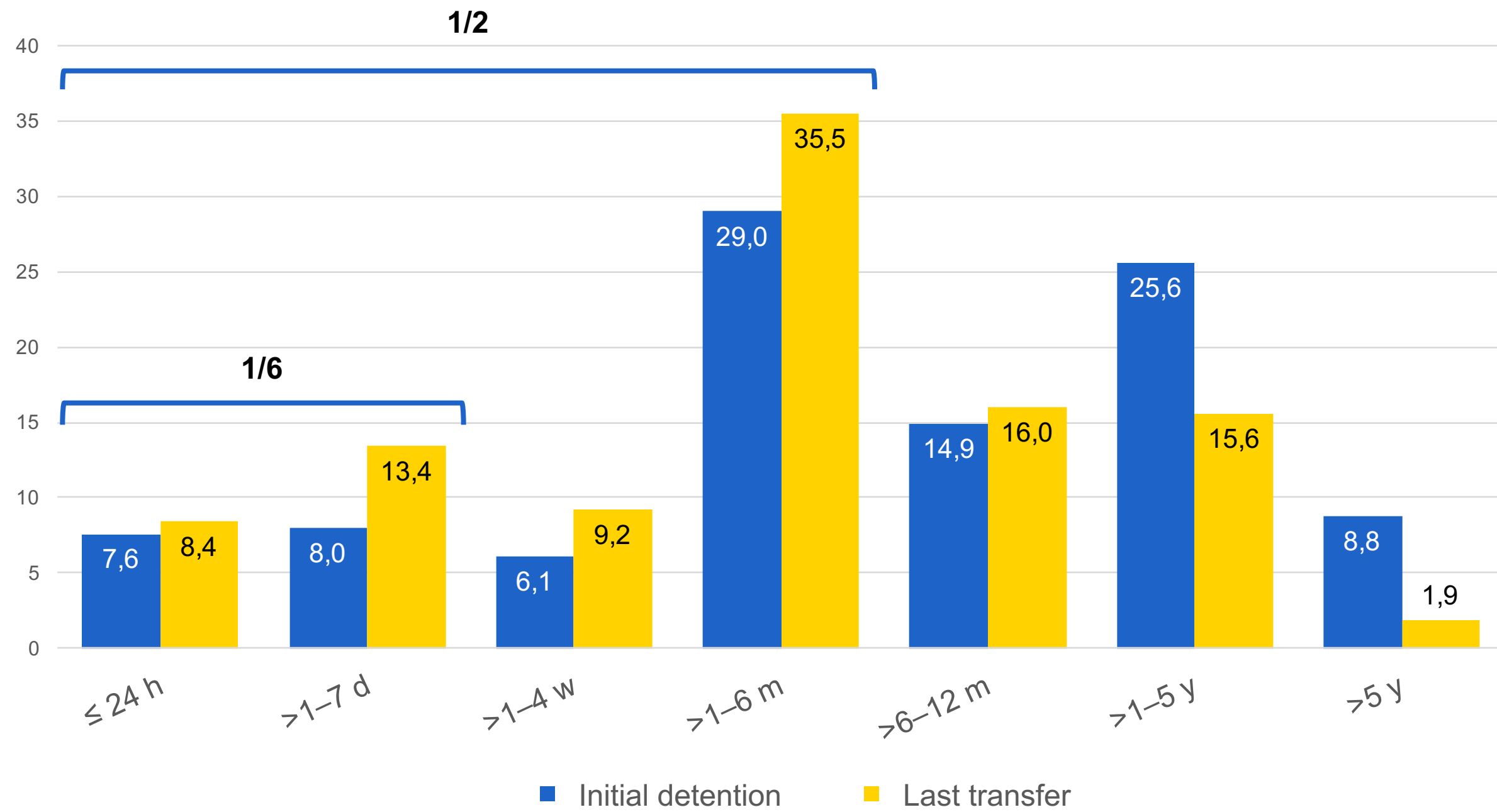
- National review of all suicide cases that occurred in the whole prison estate of Belgium from 2000 up to 2016
- Case-file study
- Standardized checklist
- Descriptive (no matched control/case)

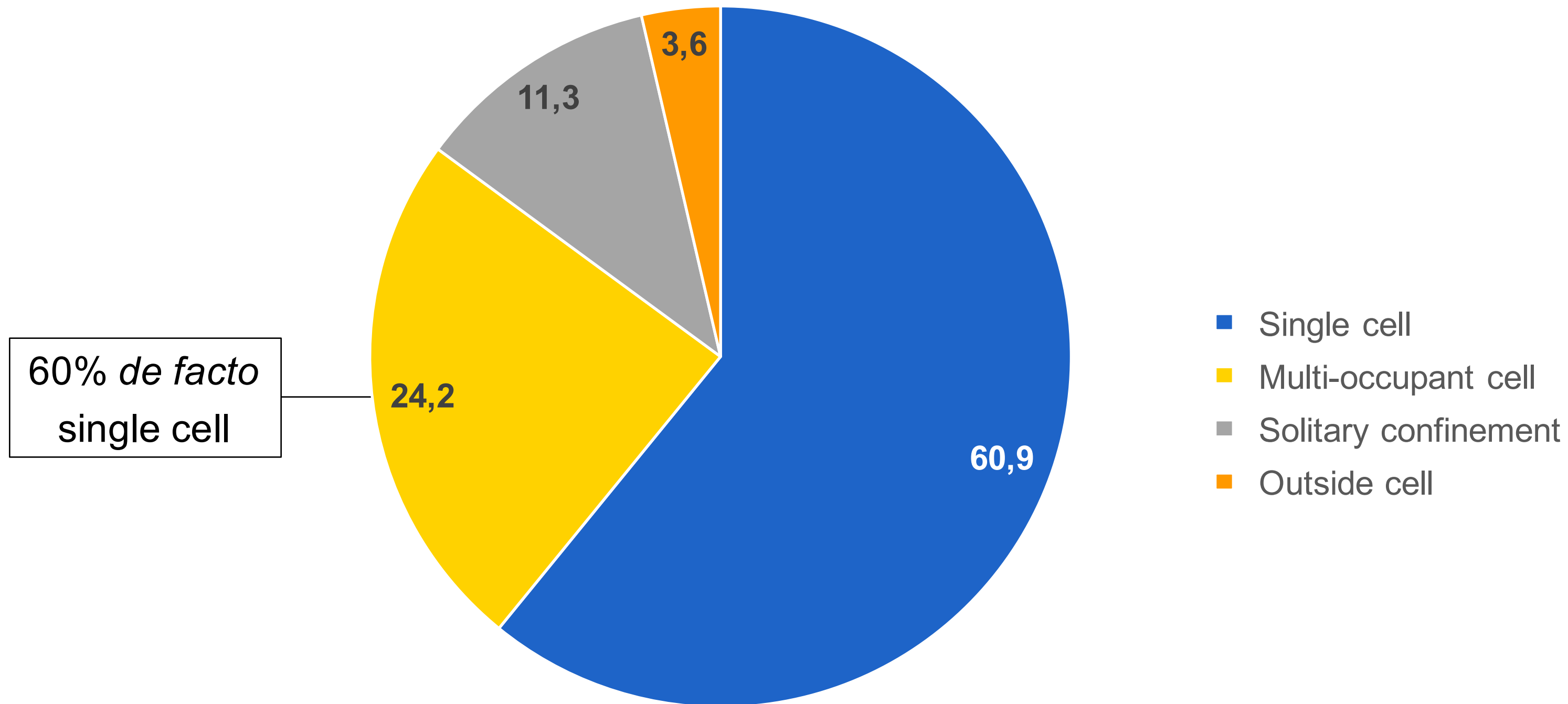
RESULTS

2000–2016



- Profile: single Belgian male, 37 years \approx general prison population
- 41.6% remand, 40.5% sentenced, 17.9% 'internee' (latter vs. 8%)
- Sexual and violent offences overrepresented (50% vs. 25%)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ *documented* suicide attempt, 80% *charted* psychiatric diagnosis (vs. 20% and 40% respectively)
- 90% hanging
- $\frac{1}{2}$ between 21:00 and 06:00







Beveren

Leuven-Hulp





1/10 in solitary confinement



IMPLICATIONS

- National standards/guidelines for suicide prevention
- Mental health care

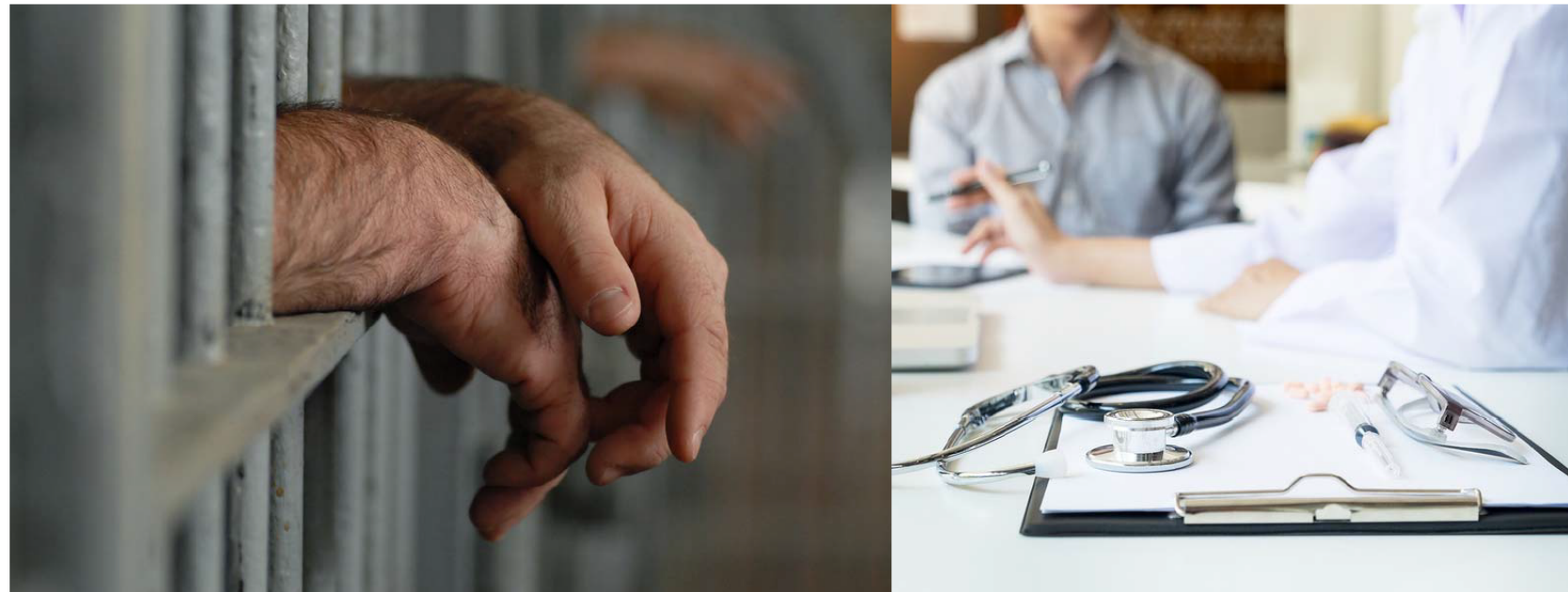
inadequate care

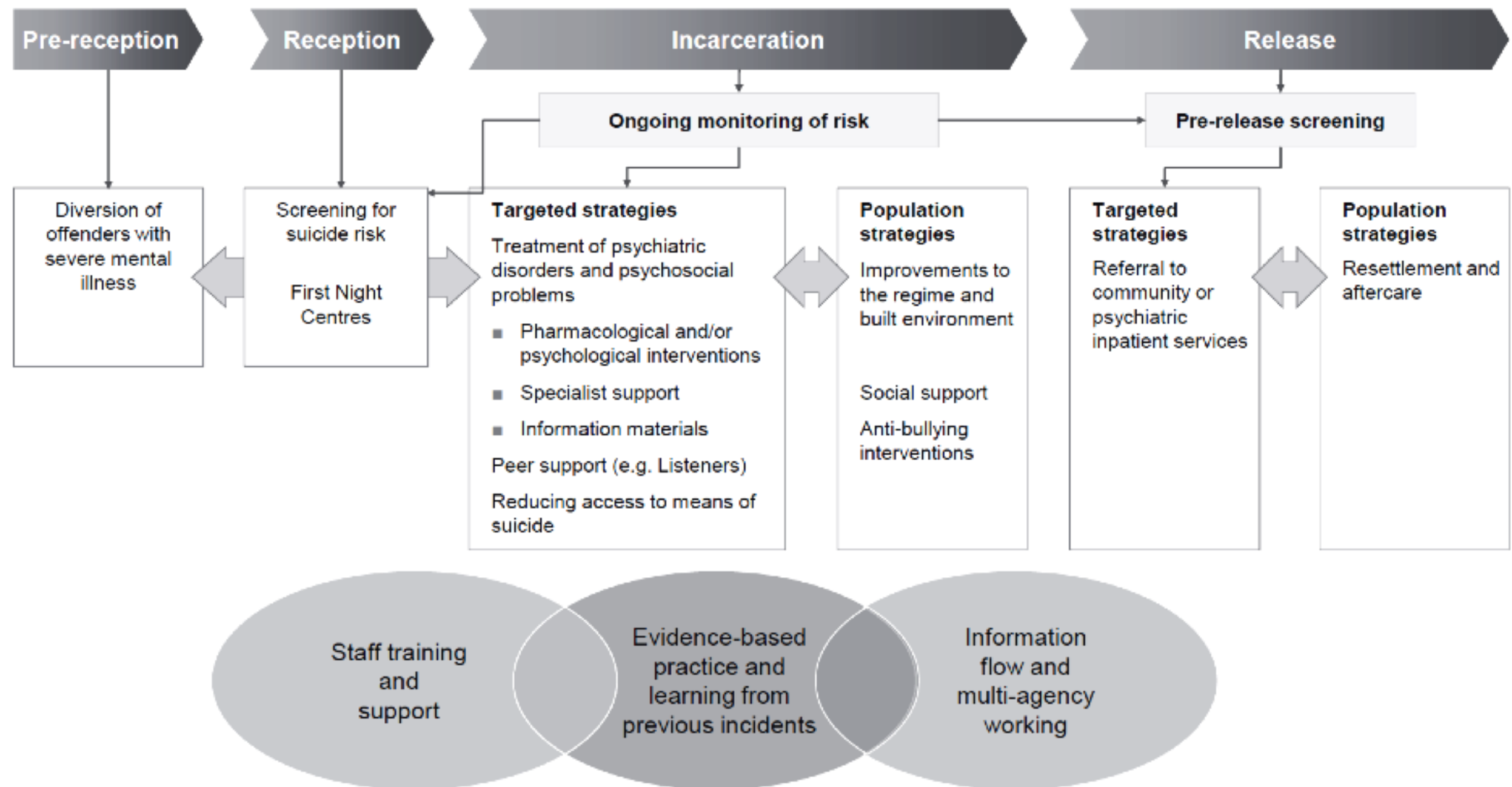
authority of Justice,
not Public Health

KCE REPORT 293Cs

SHORT REPORT

HEALTH CARE IN BELGIAN PRISONS. CURRENT SITUATION
AND SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE.







- Favril, L., Vander Laenen, F., Vandeviver, C., & Audenaert, K. (2017). Suicidal ideation while incarcerated: prevalence and correlates in a large sample of male prisoners in Flanders, Belgium. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 55, 19-28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2017.10.005>
- Favril, L., Wittouck, C., Audenaert, K., & Vander Laenen, F. (2017). *Suicide in de Belgische gevangenissen, 2000–2016*. Gent: Universiteit Gent, IRCP. <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8519991>
- Fazel, S., Ramesh, T., & Hawton, K. (2017). Suicide in prisons: an international study of prevalence and contributory factors. *Lancet Psychiatry*, 4(12), 946-952. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(17\)30430-3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(17)30430-3)
- Marzano, L., Hawton, K., Rivlin, A., Smith, E.N., Piper, M., & Fazel, S. (2016). Prevention of suicidal behavior in prisons. *Crisis*, 37(5), 323-334. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000394>

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